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ORIENTAL RUGS AND CARPETS.

A SERIES OF ARTICLES—No. 3.

BY W. L. D. O'GRADY.

THE best known among the Turkish rugs are those manufactured at and near Smyrna; brilliant in color, with chiefly turquoise blues and reds bordering on the cardinal, but freely and very successfully imitated, and exhibiting little ingenuity or novelty in the design, a stereotyped conventionalism of uncouth pots holding unknown plants, apparently akin to the sacred tree found on Assyrian monuments, appearing on nearly all of them. The little Coulas are neat and inexpensive, and handy to throw down before doors in odd corners where they can lighten up the lobbies and where their own tawdriness can be toned down. The Ghiordes are larger and of a finer character, and not long ago were great favorites, but seem to have lost caste now. The rugs from Algiers, Fez, and all the Barbary coast have a similar tendency to glaring color, and yellow is introduced more freely than in the Turkish rugs. With more rigid adherence to the tenets of Mahommed these Moorish productions eschew even the flower-pot as an ornament; the patterns are strictly geometrical, sometimes, however, enriched with Arabic mottoes from the Koran. They would seem to require a good deal of space, and by their very brilliancy are apt to kill the effect of such furniture and ornament as we are accustomed to. They, too, have had their day.

Among both the Turkish and Central Asian grand divisions of rugs, while the majority are evidently for state and domestic use, are to be found neat little prayer rugs, with a space for the head indicated, which is supposed to be always laid in the direction of the Kaaba at Mecca, and two hands rudely woven in grotesque style to assist the pious worshipper in his genuflections.

Persians are so well known among us, and have been so well imitated, so far as machine work and the dyes of modern civilization can follow the lead of the skilled handicraftsman with his rule-of-thumb chemistry handed down orally from the time of the flood, that it is scarcely necessary to describe them. Small floriated patterns, so different from the stiff, double indented borders and broken diamonds of the Daghestans, predominate. The centres have usually a governing effect in some decided color, green being evidently the most prized among the devout Shiahhs, though on close inspection it is found that every color in the rainbow is fully represented, while the rich border has a contrasting effect, with more boldness in the individual features of the composition, the whole being harmonious, restful to the eye, and yet exceedingly rich.

The carpet is thinner than almost any other Oriental carpet, and with its short pile and pure wool, from animals that browse on the plains, lacking the silky texture of the herds that gambol on mountains, there is no glossiness, but its wearing capacity is tremendous, and whether modern or ancient, no good housewife need fear to open her southern windows in brightest Summer weather on any room with a Persian carpet in it, for its colors are imperishable. Unfortunately, possibly because they never were originally properly packed with preservative spices, Persian carpets seem peculiarly susceptible to moths, and the auction rooms are frequently crowded with beauti-

ful specimens which, but for these miserable insects, would be fit for palaces. The industry flourishes in Persia, and the carpets are consequently comparatively cheap, the supply so far seeming quite equal to the demand. Were they rarer their costliness would be enhanced, of course, but their merits could not be. There is no better carpet than a Persian. While speaking thus generally, there are, of course, differences in the products of different provinces, the distinctions between which, however, are so comparatively insignificant that it sometimes puzzles experts to determine them exactly, and without very elaborate disquisitions on numerous engravings, which space will hardly admit of here, it would be almost impossible to explain them clearly.

Among the choicest are the Ispahans, Serabans, Farahans, Saunacks, the Khorassans, Sumachs, Yelis, Kelims and Ouchacks. Ladies, used in Persia for portières, but here often as rugs, are coarser, but quite attractive.

We now travel over to India, and first encounter the cousin German to the Persian carpet,

carpets are made, and an immense number of square rugs of various sizes, which are beautiful as to color, with very strongly accented borders; thus a cream centre will have a rich border with a royal purple effect, and *vice versa*. The patterns, however, are less distinctively Indian than perhaps any others in the list. The fact is, the Government has, by engaging as many of its convicts in the jail as it could find space for at carpet weaving, set the fashion for the whole neighborhood, and under the not very judicious *régime* of some zealous dabblers in art, while Mirzapores are turned out in great quantities, there are differences in them as to quality and design which it behoves the shrewd buyer to note. Their pile is long, but as a rule they are among the least durable of Oriental rugs, and while all pay the same import duty, some of the inferior sort, while strong enough, are quite too European in taste as to design and rather ultra-European in their close kinship to shoddy. As we draw nearer to the old Hindoo towns of Masulipatam, Bangalore, Vellore, Bhagulpore, Erode, etc., we find the

Hindoo element driving out the Mahomedan.

We begin to lose the fretted arched border, and the flower work is stiffer, and more resembles the rock-cut decorations of their age-defying pagodas. The Bangalore carpets, which are the best of them, are unsurpassed by any in the world, being rivalled possibly only by the Agras, and are immensely thick. There are Bangalore carpets, however, which are but sorry rubbish, a sort of drugget, and by no means admirable. A large number of convicts are at work on various styles, and many carpets are made by them to order for Americans, and as an old seat of the industry, there are many outside artisans who turn out still better work. Some exceedingly delicate rugs of particularly happy effect are made at Erode, not far off, a little station on the Madras railroad, and others of a similar character at Vellore, still nearer the Presidency town, the headquarters of the famous American Medical Mission, conducted for three generations by the eloquent and devoted Scudder family, the head of which, Rev. Dr. Henry Martyn Scudder, now of Chicago, had most wonderful success in Brooklyn. The Superintendent of the Vellore Jail, Major Wm. Sim McLeod, an old schoolfellow and classmate of the writer, was never bitten by the Europeanizing folly, and the work of his convicts is thoroughly Asiatic, with the Mahomedan blending gracefully with Hindu motives. Turning northward again, at Umritzur,

in Scinde, an old capital of the Sikhs, are to be found some superb carpets of a character of their own and very charming, the great engineer for the disposal of which is a shrewd native merchant, Davee Sahai by name, who has managed to win medals for the goods he controls at several World's Fair, notably those held in Australia, and he will probably be found well to the front at the forthcoming exhibition at Calcutta.

Then, again, in Nepal, that rugged home of the gallant little Choorkas, whose mountain passes no Moslem invader ever defiled, are produced some splendid rugs, usually quite small. Hindu throughout in feeling, but made with great delicacy and probably of the same, certainly of very similar, material as those of Cashmere.

At Hyderabad, in the Deccan, and at Waringhul, a neighboring city, under the rule of the Nizam, are produced some desirable rugs, which, however, will scarcely bear consideration beside the more splendid fabrics of Bangalore or Agra. The Charkens, too, are handsome rugs,



INDIAN CARPET.

in the shape of the Cashmere, which is a very handsome thing, indeed. Bolder in its ornamentation and characterized by the well-known shawl pattern figure, it is light, graceful and pleasing. Its texture is superb. As we proceed further inland we meet a vast variety of carpets and rugs, but which being matters of current production can be made to order of any size and any pattern. Unfortunately, this has tended to degrade Indian art by frequent admixture of a debased sort of imitation of modern European work, especially French; something that strikes one very unpleasantly as being neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring. Near the ancient seats of Mahomedan rule, as at Moultan, Ahloowalia, Allahabad, Jubbulpore, Lahore and Agra, Aurumgabad, Poona, Hyderabad and Woorunghul, the carpets are mostly of fine wool with patterns more pronounced than the Persian, and with more floriation, but bordered with the characteristic indented arch so prevalent in Mussulman architecture. At Mirzapore some remarkably showy